

*Bb Rev.*

R. HARRIS SMITH, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency*. Pp. xii, 458. Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1972. \$10.95.

This is an admirable and informative work, skillfully pieced together from all available printed sources in addition to 73 personal interviews with former members of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services), plus telephone conversations with 103 others. It is written with fair-mindedness and moderation, and is equipped with all the necessary apparatus of footnotes, lists of names, and an extensive index. It is a secret history in the sense that it describes operations the official documentation of which is still classified, but it is not written from secret classified sources. Although the author was briefly a member of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), resigning in 1968, his former employers made it clear that classified OSS archives would not be made available to him. (Thus he did not use, and probably is unaware of the existence of, an administrative history of the agency, ordered by General Donovan on July 25, 1944, of which Conyers Read of the University of Pennsylvania was appointed Chief, and of which large fragments were completed by the time the project was discontinued in September 1945.) It is indeed remarkable how comprehensive and detailed and knowledgeable this book is, in spite of its not having had the benefit of access to classified sources.

This volume is a much more systematic and analytical history of OSS than any of its predecessors. It avoids the hysterical, gee-whizzy approach which has often characterized previous accounts of General Donovan and the agency. It threads its way with remarkable skill through all the clashes of personalities and all the conflicts among competing branches of our own government, among our allies, governments-in-exile, and among political factions in maquis and underground groups, and judges each situation without *parti pris*. The author's standpoint is constantly that of being in the field, which of course makes his book all the more absorbing. But he does so at the cost of not emphasizing quite enough the organizational and constitutional history of the Washington side of the agency and of how it shifted from a brain-child of the White House created by Executive Order on July 11, 1941 to being fitted into the Joint Chiefs of Staff's chain of command on June 13, 1942.

The author speaks of this book as being a political history of the agency; it is this and more, for he describes how the OSS figured in, and was related to, the whole diplomatic and military history of the war. After a preliminary chapter on the origins of the agency, the operations of OSS are described in each theater of the war, in successive chapters dealing with North Africa, Italy, Yugoslavia, France and Germany, China ("The Chinese Puzzle," an especially good chapter), Thailand and Indochina. In addition, very particular attention is given to Allen Dulles' exploits in Berne from 1942 to 1945. The concluding

chapter is an account as well as a critique of the influence of OSS upon the development of the CIA.

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